



Structured Abstracts of 'Business, Sports and Special Events: Impacts on a Destination the Community' session

New Opportunities for Spa Tourism – Women's Spas as a Modern Return to Ancient Spa Traditions

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Background and introduction: Spas has played a significant role in health preservation and recreation for centuries, encompassing both relaxation and hygiene practices. The role of women in spa and bathing traditions is irrefutable, with beauty maintenance and fashion trends exerting a substantial influence on societal perceptions. A confluence of historical practices and contemporary wellness trends has given rise to a renewed interest in female spa intitutes, which are exclusively for women.

Objective: The objective of this study is to evaluate the demand for women spa facilities or designated female hours within coeducational baths in Hungary. The objective is to understand modern women's preferences for gender-segregated bathing environments and the potential benefits these spaces offer in terms of social interaction, health, and well-being.

Methodology: This research involved a comprehensive review of the history of spas and bathing culture. Furthermore, a survey was conducted among Hungarian women (n=500) to ascertain their interest in women spa facilities, the purposes of their visits, and the types of programs or health-promoting activities in which they would participate.

Results: The findings, evaluated by SPSS, indicate a significant interest among Hungarian women in utilising women spa facilities or attending female-designated hours in coeducational spas. The respondents (n=500) expressed a preference for engaging in sport activities, beauty treatments, health maintenance, mirroring practices from ancient spa and bathing traditions. Such environments could facilitate social connections among women, contributing positively to their mental health and overall well-being.

Conclusions: The present research highlights a contemporary necessity for women spa institutions within Hungary, in alignment with international trends underscoring the growing popularity of female spas and retreats. The establishment of such facilities has the potential to cater to women's desires for privacy, comfort, and community, while concurrently promoting health and wellness.

Limitations and future research directions: It is important to note that the study's findings may not be generalisable to other regions, due to particular cultural and geographical context. It may be beneficial for future research to explore the implementation and management of women spa facilities, assess their long-term viability, and examine their impact on women's health and social networks. In addition, conducting comparative studies across different cultures could offer a more comprehensive understanding.

Keywords: spa, spa tourism, spa tradition, spa trend, women



Essential Soft Skills for Service Providers in Tourism: A Systematic Literature Review

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Background and introduction: The role of soft skills in tourism remains an underexplored area, yet it holds both scientific and practical significance. As tourists' expectations evolve, traditional technical competencies may no longer suffice. Soft skills are increasingly essential for tourism professionals, enabling them to understand and respond effectively to shifting consumer behaviours, thereby enhancing customer satisfaction and contributing to the success of tourism service providers.

Objective: This research aims to explore the conceptual foundations and growing relevance of soft skills, particularly within the context of the business and tourism sectors.

Methodology: Employing a systematic literature review (SLR), this study critically analyses, synthesises, and evaluates academic sources on essential soft skills for the employees of service providers in tourism.

Results: The findings include a comprehensive synthesis of relevant literature and a clarification of key concepts such as skills, soft skills, and their application in tourism. The review highlights the increasing emphasis on soft skills as a strategic asset in tourism service delivery.

Conclusions: By establishing a theoretical background for the concepts of skills and soft skills, especially in tourism, this study provides a basis for future empirical research. The SLR has successfully contextualised and defined key terms, supporting the advancement of knowledge in this area.

Limitations and future research directions: Future research should focus on exploring the role of soft skills required in tourism companies for front office employees who have direct interaction with guests. Such studies could identify the key soft skills essential for employees to develop, particularly in relation to building and maintaining strong guest relationships and improving service quality.

Keywords: soft skill, systematic literature review, tourism, business



Aqua es Dominus!

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Background and introduction: The Aquaticum bathing complex in Debrecen, Hungary, with nearly 200 years of history, faced unprecedented challenges during 2019-2023 due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions and energy crisis from regional conflicts. This study examines how these external shocks affected visitor patterns at this major spa complex.

Objective: To analyze the impact of COVID-19 pandemic measures and energy crisis-related inflation on visitor numbers at the Aquaticum bathing complex in Debrecen between 2019-2023, using panel regression analysis to test specific hypotheses about external factors affecting tourism operations.

Methodology: Panel regression analysis was employed using guest data from Aquaticum Debrecen (2019-2023). Fixed effects model was selected based on the Hausman test results. Two main hypotheses were tested examining the effects of pandemic restrictions and energy crisis on visitor numbers during this challenging period.

Results: COVID-19 epidemic itself did not significantly affect visitor numbers, but specific restrictive measures (complete closures, mask mandates, vaccination card requirements) did show significant impact. Energy crisis and accompanying inflation from regional conflicts did not significantly impact visitor numbers.

Conclusions: External policy measures rather than health crises themselves drive tourism impacts. The sector demonstrated resilience to energy price fluctuations but vulnerability to regulatory restrictions. Innovation and development investment are critical for reducing energy cost exposure and maintaining operational sustainability.

Limitations and future research directions: Study limited to one facility during specific timeframe. Future research should examine multiple tourism facilities across different regions and longer time periods, investigate specific innovation strategies effectiveness, and analyze energy-efficient technologies adoption in tourism sector operations.

Keywords: tourism resilience, COVID-19, war, SPA, panel regression



The Balaton Sound's life cycle and its effects on tourist inflow and seasonality of tourism in Zamárdi and nearby municipalities

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Background and introduction: Popular music festivals have become key components of contemporary event tourism and festival tourism. These events not only offer cultural attractions but also exert significant economic and social impacts on the host destinations. Balaton Sound—operating as a major festival in Hungary between 2007 and 2024 is a prime example of how a music event can evolve into a complex tourism product.

Objective: The primary aim of this study is to explore the life cycle of the festival, with particular focus on its development, peak period, and phases of decline. The theoretical framework is based on Richard W. Butler's Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) model, which allows for the analysis of Balaton Sound's evolution and its regional impacts across six distinct stages.

Methodology: The research combines qualitative and quantitative methodologies. On the qualitative side, the study examines the stages of the festival's life cycle, local social impacts, community responses, and the transformation of the festival's image. The quantitative dimension involves the analysis of visitor numbers, guest nights, and fluctuations in the Gini index during the festival periods.

Results: The findings highlight that the festival reached its peak in the mid 2010s, when Balaton Sound had not only high tourism relevance but also substantial social prestige. This was the period during which it exerted its greatest economic and social influence on both the host town and the wider region. The decline was mainly driven by the COVID-19 pandemic, changing consumer behavior, and a perceived drop in value for money, all of which weakened the festival experience.

Conclusions: The research reveals that although Balaton Sound significantly contributed to the development of summer tourism in the region for many years, recent economic, environmental, and social challenges ultimately led to the termination of the event and a restructuring of Zamárdi's tourism landscape. This is particularly concerning given that Balaton Sound was a medium-sized, award-winning festival attracting over 100,000 visitors, and functioned as a substantial tourism product in its own right.

Limitations and future research directions: Future research directions include the analysis of life cycles and impact mechanisms of other (popular music) festivals, as well as the investigation of structural transformations triggered by such events in individual tourist destinations.

Keywords: Balaton Sound, festival tourism, tourism seasonality, Zamárdi, Butler life cycle model

Dynamic Destination Marketing Utilizing AI for Hyper-Personalized and Sustainable Tourist Engagement

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Background and introduction: This study aims to examine the role of artificial intelligence in advancing sustainable destination marketing, focusing on how hyper-personalized AI-driven engagement can contribute to responsible tourism development.

Objective: This study aims to explore the dual role of AI-driven hyper-personalization in dynamic destination marketing, focusing on its potential to enhance tourist engagement while advancing sustainability. This will be done through conducting a systematic literature review and analyzing a case study of Greece, seeking to uncover how AI can simultaneously support and challenge sustainable tourism development.

Methodology: The research adopts a systematic literature review methodology, guided by the SPAR-4-SLR framework. An initial search identified 50 relevant articles, which were systematically screened and analyzed to extract insights on the intersection of AI and sustainable tourism. In addition to the literature review, a case analysis of Greece "the Pythia AI bot" to illustrate real-world applications of AI in dynamic destination marketing.

Results: The review reveals that while AI-driven personalization enhances tourist experiences and promotes sustainability, it also presents critical challenges. Data quality and bias, risks of over-personalization, and data privacy concerns limit its effectiveness. The Greece case study highlights both opportunities for promoting sustainability and risks of commodifying cultural and environmental resources without fostering genuine engagement.

Conclusions: The study emphasizes how AI plays a dual role in sustainable destination marketing, posing both significant ethical and practical issues and providing chances for transformative participation. The study offers practical suggestions for stakeholders to strike a balance between innovation and sustainability principles in destination marketing strategies by combining insights from a systematic review and a real-world situation.

Limitations and future research directions: This study is limited by its reliance on secondary data and a case analysis, lacking primary empirical validation. Potential biases in selected articles and the use of Pythia AI for the Greece case may affect generalizability. The rapid evolution of AI technology also means findings may become quickly outdated.

Keywords: Hyper-personalization, Destination Marketing, Sustainable Tourism, Tourist Engagement, Artificial Intelligence.

Making angling tourism accessible – a natural symbiosis?

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Background and introduction: Around 15% of the world's population live with some form of disability. Outdoor activities, including angling, the number one outdoor hobby in several European countries, often lack accessibility, which is not only an obstacle for those wishing to pursue this hobby but also a lost economic opportunity for the destinations. However, there are good examples to rely on: angling tourism and recent Hungarian tourism development strategies also address this issue.

Objective: Based on the results of international studies and own research, the author presents the possibilities of making angling tourism more inclusive, also mentioning the potential lessons that can be applied by other outdoor tourism activities.

Methodology: Literature analysis, case study analysis, field work.

Results: The paper proves that it is worth counting on disabled anglers as a largely underutilised market segment, a new business potential. The author demonstrates some best practices in the field of accessible angling tourism, from different European countries.

Conclusions: Angling tourism and accessible tourism have developed a lot in recent decades both in Hungary and internationally, but there are still serious bottlenecks in this process. The paper gives best practices and ideas on how to make angling tourism more accessible.

Limitations and future research directions: It is quite difficult to reach the target group, disabled anglers, so large-scale questionnaire and other surveys concerning their special needs and problems are hard to implement.

Keywords: angling tourism, disabilities, inclusive tourism



Hybrid Insights for Heritage Destinations: Integrating Clustering and GenAI to Reimagine Boston's Tourism Strategy

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Background and introduction: As Boston approaches its 400th anniversary in 2030, there is an urgent need to revamp its tourism strategy to better engage modern, diverse travelers. Traditional marketing emphasizes Boston's history but lacks personalization. This study, conducted in partnership with the Mayor's Office of Tourism, leverages AI-enhanced methods to develop deeper insights into visitor motivations and deliver targeted strategies.

Objective: The study aims to (i) define distinct tourist personas using both clustering analysis and AI-generated interviews, (ii) develop targeted marketing strategies tailored to each persona's motivations and travel behavior, and (iii) demonstrate how Generative AI can enhance destination marketing research and planning through persona simulation and scenario modeling.

Methodology: We used a hybrid approach. Survey data from 200 Northeastern U.S. residents was analyzed using K-means clustering to identify four visitor personas. We then conducted in-depth interviews with AI-simulated versions of each persona, allowing for deeper qualitative insights. These were synthesized into actionable marketing strategies, which were embedded in a five-year interactive simulation tool.

Results: Four distinct personas emerged: The Planners, Nature Lovers, Social Explorers, and Adventurous Learners. AI interviews added depth to each profile, highlighting their motivations and unmet needs. This informed tailored marketing strategies and a scenario-based simulation, helping marketers test and refine persona-driven campaigns over time.

Conclusions: The study demonstrates the power of blending traditional segmentation with Generative AI to derive deeper, more actionable insights into traveler behavior. It offers a practical roadmap for cities like Boston to craft nuanced, persona-specific tourism campaigns that are both inclusive and adaptive. Our research also illustrates how AI can serve not merely as a tool, but as a collaborative agent in destination strategy development.

Limitations and future research directions: The personas were derived from a U.S.-based sample, limiting generalizability across international tourist populations. Future research could extend this methodology to cross-cultural or multi-lingual contexts. Additionally, while GenAI interviews yielded rich data, human validation remains essential for reliability. Longitudinal deployment of the simulation tool could further test campaign effectiveness in real-time.

Keywords: Tourism Marketing; Visitor Segmentation; Generative AI; Hybrid Research Methodology; Personalized Experiences



Social Tourism and Aging: Economic and Well-being Dimensions in Contemporary Research

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Background and introduction: This study is mapping scientific research on aging populations from 2012 to 2025, with a focus on economic sustainability and social tourism. What are the primary thematic areas and disciplinary trends in scientific research focused on aging populations, particularly about economic sustainability and social tourism? How is the concept of social tourism represented in academic literature, and what gaps exist in connecting it with the well-being and quality of life of older adults?

Objective: It aims to identify dominant themes, assess how social tourism is represented, and provide a foundation for further interdisciplinary research.

Methodology: The study applies bibliometric analysis using data from the Web of Science (2012–2025). VOSviewer software is used to perform co-occurrence analysis of keywords, enabling the visualization of thematic clusters, research trends, and disciplinary overlaps related to aging, economic sustainability, and social tourism.

Results: The analysis revealed growing interdisciplinary interest in aging, especially in health, economics, and management. Social tourism is an emerging topic, yet underrepresented. Few studies link economic sustainability with quality-of-life outcomes, highlighting a need for integrated approaches. Thematic clusters show increasing attention to non-medical strategies for aging well.

Conclusions: The study highlights rising interdisciplinary interest in aging, with growing focus on social and economic aspects. Social tourism emerges as a promising yet underexplored field. The lack of integrated models connecting quality of life with financial sustainability signals a research gap. Findings suggest social tourism can enhance well-being beyond medical care, offering valuable insights for future research and policy development.

Limitations and future research directions: The study is limited by its reliance on the Web of Science database, potentially omitting relevant literature from other sources. Additionally, restricting the analysis to English, Czech, and Slovak languages and select publication types may have introduced bias. Broader database use and keyword variety are suggested for future research.

Keywords: accessibility, bibliometric analysis, economic resources, older adults, social tourism



Disinformation and Disruption: Fake News in the Events Industry

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Background and introduction: In recent years, the number of fake news stories has significantly increased in the world, especially with the widespread use of social media. It has impacted several industries, including the events industry and events tourism. The spread of fake news can contribute to the reduction of attendance, visitor numbers and even damage the reputation of an event, contributing to economic loss.

Objective: This research explores how misinformation shape public perception, how fake news appear in the events sector, and how it affects visitor trust and future attendance in the events industry - including concerts, festivals, sporting events, conferences - and events tourism.

Methodology: First, in a comprehensive literature review, previous academic resources on fake news, the dissemination of fabricated news stories, and its impact on visitors is collected and analysed, to give a well-rounded view on the issue - with a special emphasis on fake news in the events and event tourism industries. It is followed by a qualitative content analysis, which uses case studies and media coverage to identify patterns in the spread and effects of fake news stories in the events industry.

Results: Initial findings suggest fake news stories may lead to lower attendance rates and sometimes public safety concerns as well. The spread of misinformation may also lead to the damaged reputation of events and host destinations, which also contributes to economic loss.

Conclusions: Fake news can be a great risk to the events sector, influencing visitor behaviour and trust. The spread of fake news can significantly impact perceptions of events, services, and destinations, ultimately influencing customer satisfaction and purchase decisions. The study highlights the need for misinformation management by event organisers and the media.

Limitations and future research directions: The study focuses on qualitative content analysis and only deals with a segment of the events and events tourism industry, by focusing on certain case studies. Future research could focus on psychological changes in visitor behaviour, crisis strategies, a cross-country or cross-industry comparison.

Keywords: fake news, event industry, event tourism, tourism



Treehouse Tourism in Slovakia: Theoretical Foundations, Global Trends and Perspectives In the Context of Glamping Development

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Background and introduction: Treehouse accommodation is a specific form of glamping that combines nature-based tourism with unique experiences. Despite its growing popularity, scientific attention in Slovakia remains limited. Although this trend is gaining momentum, a comprehensive scientific analysis of this phenomenon from a tourism perspective is still lacking. This study presents a theoretical framework for the analysis of treehouse tourism.

Objective: The aim is to summarise current knowledge about treehouse tourism, review domestic and foreign research to date, identify key factors in its development, and propose methodological approaches for future empirical research in Slovakia.

Methodology: The article uses methods of systematic literature review and critical analysis of relevant scientific studies, case studies, research articles, and available data on treehouse tourism at the international level. Secondary data are thematically analysed and synthesised.

Results: Previous research points to the growing importance of treehouse tourism as a form of sustainable and experiential tourism that contributes to destination differentiation. Key typologies, motivational factors for demand, and challenges related to sustainability have been identified. International studies emphasise their economic potential and experiential value. In Slovakia, existing scientific outputs are rare, which points to the need for empirical research in terms of tourism.

Conclusions: The summary of findings confirms that treehouse tourism is a significant and sustainable form of glamping with global potential for destination differentiation. Theoretical foundations and international trends show its contribution to experiential and slow tourism. However, this area has not been sufficiently researched in Slovakia, which indicates an urgent need for systematic primary research into supply, demand and sustainability.

Limitations and future research directions: The absence of primary data limits the study and reflects the initial research phase on this topic in Slovakia. Despite growing interest, there is a deficit of comprehensive scientific research in the field of tree tourism in Slovakia. The present study defines the basis for future empirical research, applying quantitative and qualitative methods, which should overcome the current gaps in knowledge and provide detailed data on the Slovak market.

Keywords: Treehouse, Glamping, Treehouse Tourism, Slovakia



The impact of sport events on the brand image of the country - focussing on mega-events

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Background and introduction: Sport has long played a vital role in the cultural and societal life of nations. Major sporting events such as the Olympic Games and world championships not only promote athletic excellence but also generate significant economic and infrastructural change, while shaping international image and cultural identity. This paper explores how sports can serve as strategic tools for enhancing national branding and fostering social and economic development.

Objective: The primary objective of this study is to explore the multidimensional economic, social, and symbolic impacts of international sport mega-events on host country image. By comparing three distinct events, the research aims to identify key mechanisms through which such events influence national branding, regional development, and long-term economic externalities, while offering policy-relevant insights for sustainable event planning.

Methodology: This study applies a case study methodology to examine the impacts of three major international sporting events: the Formula 1 Hungarian Grand Prix, the 2017 European Youth Olympic Festival (Győr), and the 2024 Paris Summer Olympics. Based on a fixed set of criteria (e.g., economic, social, image-related impacts), each case is analyzed to explore how such events shape national image and contribute to economic and infrastructural development.

Results: The three case studies—Formula 1 Hungarian Grand Prix, EYOF 2017 in Győr, and the 2024 Paris Olympics—demonstrated significant impacts on national image, economy, and infrastructure. Comparative analysis revealed differences in scale and legacy. While the F1 Grand Prix contributes to sustained tourism, EYOF and Paris showcased best practices in infrastructure reuse and sustainability, offering valuable lessons for future mega-event planning and image-building strategies.

Conclusions: The study highlights that large-scale sporting events function as strategic economic instruments with multiplier effects on GDP, tourism, and employment. Sustainable infrastructure investments and coherent nation branding yield long-term returns. Policymakers should integrate cost-benefit analysis, stakeholder engagement, and legacy planning to maximize social utility and enhance international economic positioning.

Limitations and future research directions: This research is limited by its case-study methodology, which, while insightful, constrains generalizability. Future research should apply econometric modelling and longitudinal analysis to assess causal effects. Expanding the dataset with stakeholder interviews and macroeconomic indicators could further validate findings and support robust policy recommendations regarding the economic utility of sport mega-events.

Keywords: nation branding through mega-events, tourism-driven regional development, sport-related economic externalities, infrastructure